

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN

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C O N F I D E N T I A L 0268

DEPT PASS USIA AND DIA

GENEVA FOR AMBASSADOR SHERER

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: NATO, PFOR, UR, GE, CZ

SUBJECT: V-E DAY ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS AND

U.S. PARTICIPATION IN THE LIBERATION OF
CZECHOSLOVAKIA

REF: STATE 24912

1. IN EASTERN EUROPE, CELEBRATION OF THE THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE END OF WORLD WAR II IS USED TO GLORIFY THE USSR AND
TO JUSTIFY SOVIET HEGEMONY. IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA, THE NOW-
STANDARD PHRASE, "LIBERATION BY THE SOVIET ARMY," GRATES
ON AMERICAN EARS (AND ON MANY CZECH EARS) BECAUSE IT
IGNORES THE PARTICIPATION OF US FORCES IN THAT LIBERATION.
TRANSPARENTLY, ENCOMIUMS FOR THE SOVIET ARMY AIM AT
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MAKING MORE PALATABLE THE REALITY THAT THE SOVIET ARMY

RETURNED TO CZECHOSLOVAKIA IN 1968 AND IS STILL HERE.

2. THE EMBASSY PLANS TO DO WHAT IT CAN TO SEE THE AMERICAN ROLE IN LIBERATION RECOGNIZED; BUT THE CURRENT POLITICAL CLIMATE DOES NOT YIELD MUCH GROUND FOR HOPE. WE CONSIDER IT A MATTER OF HONOR NOT TO ATTEND OFFICIAL FUNCTIONS WHOSE INVITATIONS SPECIFY "LIBERATION BY THE SOVIET ARMY." WE WOULD ALSO PLAN TO MAKE CLEAR AT AN APPROPRIATE LEVEL OUR DISSATISFACTION WITH THE AUTHORITIES' DISTORTING HISTORY IN NOT GIVING US FORCES DUE CREDIT. (DEPARTMENT MAY ALSO WISH TO CONSIDER MAKING THIS POINT ON AN APPROPRIATE OCCASION TO AMB. SPACIL.)

3. BEYOND THIS, THE BEST WE CAN DO IS TO COMMEMORATE THE ANNIVERSARY OURSELVES, FOR EXAMPLE BY MEMORIAL WREATH-LAYING CEREMONIES AND BY SOCIAL FUNCTIONS DESIGNED TO MARK THE US ROLE. IN AN EFFORT TO TELL THE STORY OF AMERICAN PARTICIPATION, DEFATT HAS BEEN IN CONTACT CONCERN-

ING FILM FOOTAGE OF US FORCES LIBERATING PILSEN AND CHEB, AS WELL AS OTHER ASPECTS OF THE US ROLE, AND WE HOPE TO HAVE A FILM PRODUCED WHICH CAN BE SHOWN TO SELECTED AUDIENCES. PAO HAS ALSO BEEN IN TOUCH WITH USIA WITH THE REQUEST TO PREPARE A PAMPHLET, POSTER DISPLAYS, AND OTHER MATERIALS FOR CAREFULLY SELECTED LOCAL DISTRIBUTION. ALL OF THE ABOVE, HOWEVER, WILL BE LIMITED IN IMPACT.

4. REFTEL SUGGESTS ANOTHER POSSIBILITY. IF SOVIETS ARE PROPOSING US-USSR JOINT 30TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS AT TIMES AND PLACES OF THEIR CHOOSING, PERHAPS THIS WOULD GIVE US SOME LEVERAGE TO REMIND EAST EUROPEANS OF THE US ROLE IN THE WAR. ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA EVEN A JOINT US-USSR CEREMONY IS BETTER THAN NO US RECOGNITION AT ALL, EMBASSY WONDERS IF PROPOSAL FOR SOME JOINT CEREMONY HERE MIGHT BE TAKEN UP WITH SOVIETS ALONG WITH SOME OF THEIR PROPOSALS. IF THE SOVIETS ARE TO GAIN SOME POLITICAL POINTS FROM THE JOINT CELEBRATIONS, PERHAPS WE COULD GAIN A FEW TOO. DEPARTMENT'S COMMENTS WOULD BE APPRECIATED.
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